



SELF-CARE WHEN YOU HAVE A HEADACHE

For a headache in progress, try the following. You may find the earlier you stop whatever you're doing and try one of these techniques, the more likely you will find relief. Note: If you ever experience a sudden severe headache unlike anything you've experienced before, seek medical attention immediately.



Massage your head. Use your fingers to make small circles on your forehead, temples, and scalp. Massage for up to 30 seconds in each spot. Use a comfortable amount of pressure.

Cold or hot packs. Put ice (or a bag of frozen peas) in a cloth and press it against the painful spot, or against the back of your neck. If you don't get relief, switch to a heating pad, hot water bottle, a microwavable hot pack, or a hot, wet towel in a large plastic baggie and a dry towel or fleece to hold in the heat. Try each for 15 to 20 minutes at a time.



Try neck massage. Reach around and cup the base of your neck with your palm. Using a comfortable amount of pressure, knead the muscle slowly from bottom to top.

Brush your hair. Gently brush from the temple, moving gradually to the base of the skull. Do one side a time. Then brush from forehead to the back of your neck.



Use an acupressure technique. With your thumb and first finger, squeeze a point near the base of your thumb on your other hand in the fleshy part of the webbing between your thumb and first finger. Hold until the discomfort subsides. Repeat up to five times.

(*Avoid this technique if pregnant or trying to become pregnant)

Consider increasing the frequency of your professional massage sessions, even if you must reduce the length of each session. The benefits of massage are cumulative and may act to prevent the development of tension that can lead to headaches.

RESOURCES

Headache Help: A Complete Guide to Understanding Headaches and the Medicines that Relieve Them. Lawrence Robbins, MD and Susan Long.

An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide to Headaches. Robert Milne, MD and Blake Moore with Burton Goldberg.

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